



# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The First Year

## Part 1

*Severus Snape looked down at the children, a healthy sneer on his face. He'd told no one how hard it was to maintain that sneer, especially when he looked at those two - well, those three if you included Pugsley - but it was those two the most. They were the perfect Slytherins.*

*They believed in... well, he wasn't quite sure just what they believed in, but they certainly believed in it. They were self contained and could be charming.*

*Until you stepped out of line, that is.*

*When you did step out of line, they fell on you like a ton of bricks, or a series of Bludgers, or an army of killer ants, or any other metaphor that would demonstrate that antagonizing them was tantamount to volunteering to be sent to Azkaban – extremely dangerous and unpleasant, but not completely fatal.*

*It was at their Sorting that Snape first recognised the things that he once thought absolute were wrong, and that the time that was approaching would be like nothing he had ever expected to experience.*

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They weren't the first in the line. Nor were they the last. But they stood out like the eye of a storm. All around them, children were looking around eagerly, staring at the ceiling, the ghosts, the tables, even the staff.

But not these two. The one standing next to them seemed a bit of a compromise: half of the restraint and half the curiosity.

Snape tried to look at the other children, but his eyes kept coming back to the two in the middle.

*She* was dressed perfectly. There was not a crease on her robes nor a hair out of place. Her eyes were dark, incredibly so. Snape almost got the impression that her eyes were sucking in the light and not letting it go.

He let his eyes drift to her right, to the son of the man he hated more than anyone else. But he couldn't shake the feeling that, regardless of the name, that boy was not a Potter.

*His* face was totally expressionless, not the fake emptiness of someone hiding his emotions, but the total lack of emotions of someone who had decided that emotions were something to be used the same way one might use a particularly efficient arm movement.

Almost absently, he let his mind stretch out, using Legilimency to see what the boy was thinking. The only problem with this was that the boy wasn't there. There was no mind for him to connect with. He tried hard not to shudder and to repress the fear that was reflexively crawling through him.

Something had just entered Hogwarts, and it was not what everyone expected.

"Abbot, Hannah," McGonagall called out. She was a Hufflepuff; there was no doubt in his mind at all.

"Addams, Pugsley," McGonagall said, after Abbot had been sorted into Hufflepuff.

The boy that was the girl's brother walked cheerfully to the chair. He showed no fear at all, and started to lift the hat toward his head.

"Slytherin!" the Hat shouted, long before it got anywhere near the boy's head.

There was a gasp, one he tried hard not to join in. The Hat always touched the child's head. The fact that it didn't raised possibilities that suggested his fears were not without foundation.

Pugsley cheered and bounced over to the table, sitting exactly three places down from the top of the table. The implication wasn't lost on Snape. Pugsley obviously expected the girl and boy to join him.

A Potter in Slytherin? Incomprehensible. Or was it? For this Potter, maybe it wasn't.

"Addams, Wednesday," McGonagall said into the absolute silence that currently blanketed the Great Hall.

The girl walked forward slowly.

"S-s-s-s..." The Sorting Hat stuttered as it jerked, looking like it was trying to escape the girl who was closing in on it inexorably.

For the first time, an expression appeared on her face.

It was a small smile.

Severus Snape had betrayed Voldemort, had stood up to Albus Dumbledore. He had seen power. He had seen evil. Nothing had ever made his blood freeze like the smile on her face.

She reached up and grabbed the stuttering Hat and placed it on her head.

Snape knew that she knew that the Hat was terrified of her.

“Slytherin! And for the love of Hogwarts, get her away from me!” the Hat screamed. “Please, Merlin!”

“Are you sure?” The girl’s voice had a slight American drawl to it, but it was soft, not harsh. Its very normalcy seemed to make it a hundred times worse than Voldemort’s hiss.

“YES, YES, YES!” the Hat shouted.

“If you insist,” Wednesday said softly, and removed the Hat, placing it on the stool.

The Hat started to sob as she walked over to the Slytherin table, the smile gone from her face.

“Yea! Way to go Wends!” Pugsley cheered.

Wednesday lightly touched his back as she sat next to him, leaving the place at the top of the table free.

“Bones, Susan,” McGonagall whispered.

The young girl, definitely another 'Puff, ran to the Hat and placed it on her head.

Nothing happened, except the Hat continued to sob.

Susan looked terrified as she turned to look at McGonagall.

McGonagall strode over to the girl and took the Hat of her head and placed it on her own head.

Snape watched as Minerva’s eyes twitched with the signs that she was having an in-depth conversation, but nothing was happening.

She opened her eyes and looked at Albus. He shrugged. She sighed and summoned a bottle of Firewhisky.

“Nerves,” she explained to the Headmaster’s somewhat incredulous look.

She opened the bottle and poured it into the Hat’s mouth. The hat guzzled, belched and then sighed. “Okay, I can continue now,” he said. “As long as there are no other surprises.”

Snape found his eyes moving to Harry.

The rest of the Sorting went as expected. He cheered silently as his god-daughter was sorted into Slytherin house. Draco Malfoy was placed in Slytherin, and he looked slightly irritated that no one cheered for him. No one was doing any cheering. It seemed that Snape wasn’t the only one to see that Potter still hadn’t shown a sign of emotion as he stood, alone from the remaining students, his green eyes blank.

“Potter,” McGonagall seemed to take a deep breath. “Harry.”

Harry moved toward the Hat purposefully.

There was a sigh of relief as the Hat didn’t start to shake.

He picked it up and sat down.

Nothing happened.

There was no sign of anything on the boy’s face; no sign of anything from the Hat.

They waited.

And waited.

Whispers started around the hall as the longest Sorting they had ever seen, continued.

“Hat?” McGonagall asked.

“Well,” the Hat snapped, “where’s my next student? I’ve not got all day.”

“You’re sitting on his head,” McGonagall pointed out.

“No I’m not!”

“You are,” were the first words that anyone in the school heard from Harry James Potter. His voice was smooth, silky, and had a vaguely hypnotic aspect that was frankly impossible to comprehend.

The Hat squeaked in surprise. “How in Hogwarts am I supposed to sort you?” the Hat demanded.

Harry was silent for a few seconds. "I don't believe that is my problem," he eventually replied.

The Hat huffed. "Well, if I can't sort you, then you'll have to choose a House."

Harry placed the hat back on the chair and turned, walking to the Slytherin table, sitting next to Wednesday.

Snape turned to look at the Headmaster, who appeared as stunned as everyone else.

"Can he *do* that?" McGonagall asked.

"It's written in the spell that created me," the Hat replied sourly, his tone abrasive. "If I can't sort a student, for any reason, then the student gets to choose."

"How many times has it happened before?" McGonagall asked softly.

"It hasn't. Can we get on with the rest of the Sorting now?"

The remaining students were sorted quickly and easily, but there was still none of the normal noise that attended a Sorting. Everything was done in complete silence.

After the meal was over and the prefects were leading the students to their common rooms, Snape followed Albus to his office. Minerva, Pomona and Filius were already there, Firewhisky poured into glasses. The Hat was stationary on the top of the table.

Albus sank into his chair. "A most unusual Sorting," he said.

The Hat snorted. "Why is that Addams girl at Hogwarts?" he demanded. "She's an American; she should be in Salem."

"I had to bring her here," the Headmaster explained. "If I hadn't, Harry would have gone to Salem as well."

"All this fuss for Potter?" Snape sneered, more to keep up his reputation than from any deep belief that Potter wasn't a worthy topic for their discussion.

"Severus," Albus chided with a sigh.

"What happened, Hat?" Minerva asked.

"I can't tell you," the Hat said with a sigh. "I'm not allowed to divulge what I learn from a student's mind. You know that." He paused. "My reaction should have given you enough of a hint."

"Moving on," Albus said. "About Mr Potter."

"I know nothing about Mr Potter," The Hat stated. "There was nothing there."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing," Severus added. "I tried to scan him, and his mind didn't even seem to be there."

"Occlumency?"

"No, that reports as a presence. This was nothing at all."

"Well, I believe that Mr Potter is in the wrong place," Albus said cheerfully. "Let's get him up here and get him into Gryffindor."

"You do that," the Hat said quietly, "and I will never be able to Sort children again."

"Excuse me?" Albus said, sounding bewildered.

"If you break the rules I was charmed with, I will fade away and you will have to find a new way to Sort next year."

"But..." Albus started.

"I was created by the Founders of Hogwarts to Sort without prejudice. My word is final. It was Rowena who put the safeguard in place, that a student I couldn't Sort would be able to choose his own house. But when a student chooses, then it is the same as if I had chosen. You move him, and I will have failed, and if I have failed, my purpose is over." He paused. "If there's nothing else, I'd like to finish that bottle of Firewhisky and try to forget about today."

Silently, Minerva drained the bottle into the Hat's mouth and placed him back on the shelf. It didn't take long before the Hat was snoring.

"Headmaster," Filius said after a few minutes, "why do we have new wards?"

"What?" Minerva asked.

"I was looking at them this morning, and noticed a few new ones. Quite vicious, I must say, but targeted."

Albus sighed once more. "The Addams Family demanded that they be able to improve them. It seems that their clan has a few enemies, and they take the security of their children seriously. The wards will not interfere with my running of the school, nor will they stop anyone, other than those they deem to be enemies."

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*Starting a new class always made him irritable. The thought of so many perfectly good potion ingredients being wasted was never a good thing. But this year it was worse. He had prepared what he was going to say to Potter long in advance. He had been waiting for the opportunity.*

*He just didn't know if he could go through with it.*

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"You are here to learn the subtle science and exact art of potion making," he began. "As there is little foolish wand-waving here, many of you will hardly believe this is magic. I don't expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses.... I can teach you how to bottle fame, brew glory, and even stopper death -- if you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads as I usually have to teach."

Harry and Wednesday stared at him, their silent attention more unnerving than anything he had dealt with before, and he didn't understand why.

They were only eleven. He could handle them.

"Potter!" he snapped suddenly. "What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

Harry tilted his head slightly. He eventually replied in his smooth voice, "According to the seventh year Potions book I read, it creates a sleeping potion that is known as the Draught of Living Death."

Snape had the feeling that he'd just been rebuked, but took a deep breath. "And where would you find a bezoar?"

"I believe that was in the same seventh year book," Harry replied, "in the stomach of a goat."

Snape stared at him, trying very hard to ignore the fact that he was certain, somehow, that Wednesday was seriously contemplating a bezoar search in *his* stomach.

"Ten points to Slytherin," he said softly, "it's good to see that someone is reading ahead. Can anyone tell me what the difference is between monkshood and wolfsbane?"

"Seven letters," Wednesday responded before Granger's hand was halfway up.

Snape looked at her, his lips twitched. "Indeed," he agreed. "For those of you who are idiots, they are the same thing with a different name."

He knew he had chickened out, that he hadn't enacted the revenge that he had sworn he would on Potter's child, but he had at least kept his dignity.

After the class was over, he took a long drink of Firewhisky and contemplated going to Albus to tell him that *something* had entered Hogwarts, but eventually decided not to. He was just being silly, and he knew it.

The next Thursday, he stood and watched the first flying lesson of the year. He always did, looking for new Quidditch talent, and he knew that Minerva did as well.

He refused to admit, even to himself, that he was hoping that Potter would be good - because his team desperately needed some real talent.

"Everyone, stand by a broomstick," Madam Hooch barked.

Harry and Wednesday did exactly as they were told, standing in the silence that was becoming their hallmark.

"Stick out your right hand over your broom and say 'Up!'"

Harry and Wednesday's brooms seemed to rocket into their hands, slapping into place with audible thumps. Not all of the students were as successful.

"Now, when I blow my whistle, you kick off from the ground, hard," Madam Hooch said, after showing them how to mount their brooms and grip them correctly.

Neville Longbottom, who would have had his parents rolling in their graves, had they been dead, seemed incapable of following even that simple instruction, and rocketed into the air.

"Come back, boy!" Hooch yelled. Her shout seemed to have the affect of the boy paling, before topping to one side and falling twenty feet to the ground.

Hooch stormed over to him, her face as white as his had been, before the fall.

"Broken wrist," she muttered. "Come on, boy -- it's all right, up you get."

She turned to the rest of the class. "None of you is to move while I take this boy to the hospital wing! You leave those brooms where they are or you'll be out of Hogwarts before you can say 'Quidditch.' Come on, dear."

Longbottom hobbled off, holding his arm with tear tracks running down his face.

Snape shook his head and sighed.

"Did you see his face, the great lump?" Malfoy sniggered.

"Shut up, Malfoy," snapped Parvati Patil.

"Ooh, sticking up for Longbottom?" Pansy Parkinson sneered, like a good Slytherin, "Never thought you'd like fat little crybabies, Parvati."

"Look!" Malfoy said, darting forward and snatching something out of the grass. "It's that stupid thing Longbottom's gran sent him."

The Remembrall glittered in the sun as he held it up.

"I think I'll leave it somewhere for him to find it," Draco mused, "perhaps up a tree."

"You're being a dick," Pugsley told Draco with a long-suffering sigh. "Picking on others makes you weak, cowardly, and a bully."

"Oh yeah?" Draco retorted. "Why don't you try and stop me?" He took off, flying into the air. Pugsley looked at Harry, who rolled his eyes, and lightly touched Wednesday's arm. She smiled faintly and made a short slashing motion with her arm.

Draco's broom suddenly stopped moving. Unfortunately, he didn't. The boy screamed as he fell down, landing with a loud thump.

"What's going on here?" McGonagall demanded as she ran toward them.

"Draco's mouth exceeded his skill with a broom," Harry said smoothly. "He decided that he wanted to show us all his unique flying skills, so he ignored Madam Hooch's demand that we stay on the ground while she dealt with Longbottom and then fell off during a loop."

McGonagall looked around at the other students, before nodding to herself. "Ten points from Slytherin," she yelled as she stormed toward the prone boy. "And a week's worth of detention." She looked down at him and levitated him into the air. "I expect all of you to stay where you are," she growled, "or I will personally see to it that you leave Hogwarts today."

She stormed off, the unconscious form of Draco Malfoy in tow.

Harry wandered across to where Draco had fallen. He picked up the Remembrall and walked back, before tossing it casually to Pugsley. "See that the boy gets it," Harry said.

"Will do," Pugsley said cheerfully. "Thanks."

Harry shrugged and sat down with Wednesday, it wasn't long before they were involved in a low voiced conversation.

Snape turned silently and walked off, digesting what he had just seen.

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*He shifted his eyes to look at Draco Malfoy. The prince of Slytherin, or he had been, for at least a month. But then he had demanded subservience from Wednesday.*

*He had no idea why Draco picked her first. Perhaps it was because she was a girl. Perhaps because he thought she was the weakest. Perhaps he knew that she was the one who had sabotaged his broom.*

*Perhaps his unconscious mind was playing tricks on him, and he was acting out a subconscious death wish?*

*He had been standing, unseen, in the Slytherin common room, watching.*

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"Addams," Draco drawled. "Girl, fetch me a new quill."

Wednesday ignored him.

"I said," Draco said louder, attracting the attention he so obviously craved. "Get me a new quill."

Wednesday failed to acknowledge his presence. Pugsley looked up and grinned, a manic grin that vanished as soon as it arrived. Harry was in his normal place, right next to Wednesday, closer than most people, even people years older than the first year pair, would comfortably sit.

Draco stood and sauntered over to the desk they were working at. "I told you to *do* something," he sneered. "And when I tell you to do something, you do it, got it?"

Wednesday ignored him.

"My father," Draco purred, "is the Dark Lord's right hand man. When he returns, my father will ensure that all my enemies get what is coming to them."

Wednesday looked up at him curiously. "You are trying to intimidate me by telling me that you have no power and influence of your own, so all you can wield is that which your father may or may not have someday?"

Draco paled before flushing. "Watch what you say," he snarled and raised his hand.

Without looking up from his book, Harry's right hand shot out and grabbed the raised arm. He pulled it, hard, pulling Draco off balance. A high-pitched scream of agony punctured the air.

In a split second, Draco's hand was flat on the table, his arm bent at an unnatural angle, a kitchen knife pierced through his palm, pinning his hand to the table. Harry was as he was before, doing his homework, no emotion on his face.

Wednesday reached out and took Draco's cheek, forcing the blond boy to look up at her.

"If you wish to warn your father, know this," she whispered, her voice chilling in its complete lack of inflection, its lack of tone. "I will be the Dark Lady," she continued, her almost silent voice somehow filling the common room. "Next to my Dark Lord, and we will rule for eternity. Voldemort is a fool, a peasant, and if he returns, we will deal with him, as we have dealt with every other person who has stood in our way.

"We have a grave already dug for him." She paused and seemed to lean in. "And if he's very good, we'll resurrect him so he can join our Halloween parties."

There was a series of audible gulps around the common room.

"So, Malfoy, take the knife out of your hand, and crawl to the school nurse, *hijo de puta*."

For the first time, Harry looked up. His eyes locked on Wednesday's. "You spoke Spanish," he said, his voice suddenly sounding older than his eleven years. "*Mi amor*"

Wednesday's face changed, and for the first time, a hint of emotion showed. A shy smile appeared.

Harry was on his feet, Draco forgotten, as he waved his wand enthusiastically. A flamenco beat filled the air, as Harry pulled Wednesday into his arms, and started to dance her around the common room.

He dipped her, and when he pulled her up, she had the bright green stem of a red rose in her teeth. He spun her around, holding his hand above her head. She spun gracefully, and when she stopped, her robe had turned into a blood red dress.

He stepped away from her, circling her, as he snapped his heels onto the ground and his robe changed into a tuxedo that fit his small frame perfectly.

He raised her right hand and kissed it gently, his eyes locked on her, and they danced, ignoring everything and everyone else.

The music stopped abruptly, as did they. She was stretched over, held up by one of his arms, as they stared into each other's eyes.

Pugsley was smiling at them both.

Harry pulled her up, and the emotions faded from both their eyes, leaving only their smooth masks. They stepped apart and in an instant they were back in their robes, as if they had never changed, never danced.

They walked, in perfect harmony, back to the desk, and sat down again. Harry reached out and casually removed the knife from Draco's struggling hand and threw it, hard, fast.

Snape gulped as the knife stuck into the wall next to his left ear.

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*That was only the first time that they had dealt with Draco; Narcissa's boy had proved remarkably stubborn, unable to handle the fact that he was outclassed on every level.*

*What had convinced him more than anything else that they were Slytherins was their dealing with other houses, and the youngest male Weasley in particular.*

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"You're a Slytherin," Ron shouted, his face red. "Everyone knows that all evil comes from Slytherin."

Wednesday paused her eating and looked across the Hall at him. She looked at him like an entomologist would look at a bug staked out on the table before her.

“Evil does not come from a house,” she said, in that same eerie voice she used whenever she was making a point. It was voice that no one could ignore. In the blink of an eye, she had moved, across the hall, and was holding Ron’s head back, a knife at his throat.

Snape struggled to keep his astonishment off his face. Everyone was silent, stunned. No one had seen her move, she didn’t have her wand, and yet still she had done it.

“Evil comes from deep inside you, in that special place you keep just for bigoted ideas,” she finished gently.

No one, not even the Professors, seemed willing to break the silence.

The door opened and Professor Quirrell came sprinting into the hall, his turban askew and terror on his face.

Everyone stared as he reached Professor Dumbledore’s chair, slumped against the table, and gasped, “Troll -- in the dungeons -- thought you ought to know.”

He then sank to the floor in a dead faint.

There was a deep inhalation, as if everyone was preparing to scream at once.

“Don’t,” was Harry’s single word, and no one said anything.

Dumbledore opened his mouth.

“We’re safe here, the doors are shut,” Harry continued, before resuming his meal.

“Is anyone missing?” Pugsley asked cheerfully.

“H-H-H-Hermione,” Ron croaked out from beneath Wednesday’s knife.

“Can I keep her dead body?” Wednesday asked Harry. “I could play a game with it.”

Harry shook his head slowly. “What did you promise me?”

Wednesday absently stepped away from Ron, as if he was of no meaning or consequence.

“No necromancy until I’m sixteen, or until we finally have sex,” she said, her voice taking on a sing-song tone. Suddenly a bright smile that looked strangely out of place appeared on her face. “*Te deseo, mi amor*,” she purred.

Harry visibly shuddered. In an instant, he was next to her, gasps filling the room again. Everyone, even Snape, seemed to be under their hypnotic spell.

“You might,” he whispered, “but alas, puberty hasn’t hit either of us yet.”

Wednesday’s response was short and to the point and barely audible.

“But,” Harry offered, “you can make a potion with the eyes of a freshly slain Troll that makes the plague look like the common cold.”

“Pugsley,” Wednesday’s voice cracked like a whip. “Go get the Troll.”

“Woo-hoo!” Pugsley yelled happily, and ran out the door.

“I must protest,” Albus said, shaking his head as if he had been in a daze. “Students, to your common rooms.”

“No,” Harry said softly, his eyes not moving from Wednesday’s face.

None of the students moved as Albus stared down at them.

“Pugsley is bringing the Troll here,” Harry said. “You’d be dead out there.”

“Let them go,” Wednesday pleaded, “please?”

Harry’s left hand reached out and stroked her cheek.

“I have no control over them,” he replied to her, “only advice. They should listen to their Headmaster.”

“Children,” Dumbledore said. “The safest place for you is your common rooms. The doors can be locked. Prefects, escort the children.”

Not one single student showed even the faintest hint of moving.

The door flew open and Pugsley ran in, a beaming smile on his face. “Look what I found,” he said, holding out Hermione in both arms. “Can I keep her?”

“You may,” Wednesday intoned solemnly.

"All right!" Pugsley yelled, and did a little dance. Hermione's eyes were wide, but she didn't seem to be protesting. "She was in the girls' bathroom, I got her out the way and now the Troll's coming here."

"Oh goody," Wednesday said in an almost gleeful tone of voice, rubbing her hands together.

Pugsley walked over to the Gryffindor table and sat down.

"Pugsley," Harry called.

The boy looked up.

"I'm proud of you."

Pugsley smiled as if he had just won the lottery.

"Ready, my love?" Harry asked Wednesday.

"I must protest," Dumbledore said as he stared at them, magic radiating from him as he commanded attention.

Harry and Wednesday ignored him,

The doors smashed open again and the Troll stood there, holding a club.

He roared, causing some of the children to shake with fear.

"Oh Harry," Wednesday breathed. "He's beautiful; can I have him as a pet instead?"

"The Ministry doesn't allow it," Harry said regretfully.

"Oh well then, ingredients he shall be," she said as she walked toward the large Troll.

The Troll roared again and Albus raised his wand.

"No!" Harry's voice stopped him - and everyone else - from interfering.

The Troll scratched his head, looking confused at the non-reception he was getting.

Wednesday's wand was in her hand as she walked up to him. "It's time for you to die," she said regretfully, and bowed gracefully.

From behind her, summoned from no-one-knew-where, hundreds of knives shot over her head and crashed into the Troll.

The Troll looked down at its chest in surprise, before he slumped to a sitting position, and his eyes rolled into the back of his head. Then he collapsed, dead.

Pugsley appeared - in a conventional manner - next to Wednesday, and quickly climbed up the Troll. He made short work of harvesting the eyes for his sister with a dinner knife, dropping them in a glass of water taken from a nearby table.

"Thank you," she told him.

He grinned at her and returned to the Slytherin table, putting the glass next to Wednesday's plate.

"Professor Snape," Harry said respectfully, "do you need any Troll ingredients?"

Snape didn't answer immediately, as he controlled himself to ensure that he would not stutter. "Not at the moment," he replied, in the calmest voice he could muster.

Harry clapped his hands sharply. A house-elf appeared. "Please feed this Troll to the thestrals," Harry ordered.

The house-elf nodded and clapped its own hands; twenty more house-elves appeared, and together they floated the Troll out the door.

Snape turned to look at Albus and almost smiled; the look of confusion was one he expected to see a lot on the face of his old friend in the future.

"Weasley," Harry's voice seemed to caress the word as he stared at the red-haired boy. "Exactly why was Granger not at dinner, and how did you know about it?"

Ron seemed unable to look away. "I told her she's a nightmare," he replied in a dreamy voice. "Always getting things right, showing us up. She was crying and ran away." Ron paused, and then in a barely audible voice added, "Her bloody cat probably ate my rat as well."

"Someone was better than you, so you belittled her?" Harry asked, his gentle tone a stark contrast to his words.

Ron nodded.

Harry looked away and Ron shook himself, before a look of horror appeared on the boy's face.

And you dare to call me evil," Harry noted absentmindedly, as he returned to his place at the Slytherin table, Wednesday next to him.

"Mr Potter," Albus shouted. "My office, immediately."

Harry looked up and sighed. "You don't want to reward us in public?" he asked.

Dumbledore swallowed and looked at him. "Reward?"

Harry smiled at the Headmaster, and Snape felt chills go up his back. "Why, yes; Pugsley rescued an errant Gryffindor, I stopped you from sending Slytherin house toward the Troll, and Wednesday showed just how easy it is to deal with ignorant and harmless beasts."

Dumbledore's smile suddenly reappeared. "Quite right," he agreed, his eyes twinkling. "Fifty points each."

"And fifty points from Gryffindor for bullying and endangering another student's life," Snape sneered.

Harry nodded. "After you then, sir," he said politely.

Dumbledore nodded and walked down to the table, heading out.

"Wednesday," Harry said, offering his arm. He looked at Pugsley. "She's your responsibility now," he said, indicating Hermione.

Pugsley smiled.

Together, the far-too-old-for-their-years eleven year olds walked after the Headmaster.

Snape found himself on his feet, following them. He wouldn't miss what was going to happen next, even if Potter was the son of his enemy - a fact he was finding harder and harder to believe as time went on.

The two children sat in front of the Headmaster's desk, together but not touching.

Dumbledore looked at them silently.

Neither of them showed any discomfort as they sat in silence. Not a single expression crossed their faces as they waited patiently. Snape got the impression that they would have waited for eternity.

Albus obviously did as well, as he smiled at them. "Lemon drop?"

Wednesday reached out and took one, popping it in her mouth. A look of abject revulsion appeared a second later and she spat it out into a handkerchief, Harry's handkerchief.

Yet again, Snape restrained the urge to gape. Harry had started to pull out the handkerchief before Wednesday had even moved to take the sweet. He had moved it up to her mouth just as she spat it out, as if he had known exactly what was going to happen, and had simply reacted.

"Not to your taste?" Dumbledore enquired politely.

Neither deemed that question worthy of response.

"Now," Dumbledore said. "I must object to you threatening Mr Weasley. His words might have been a little hasty, but his heart is in the right place. You might find that you like him if you spent some time with him."

"He is a closed-minded bigot," Wednesday said quietly. "And only weak people threaten."

"Excuse me?"

"A threat is something you make when you have very little intention of following through on it," Harry explained calmly. "We make promises. If he talks to Wednesday like that again, I'll give him to her as a gesture of affection."

"You two do seem very close," Dumbledore continued, ignoring the substance of what Harry had just said. "May I ask about your relationship?"

"No."

Dumbledore looked nonplussed for a second.

"May I ask about your childhood?" he tried again, directing his question toward Harry.

"Why?"

"Was it a good one?"

"I fail to see how this question is relevant," Harry replied. "However, I'll reply anyway. It was."

"Excellent," Albus said slowly.

"Was there anything else?"

"No, you may go."

And they did, without a word or a look.

---

Albus had been troubled after the interview, and hadn't said anything for a long time. Snape had tried to work out just how the two of them seemed to be able to capture everyone's attention so easily, and ignore it the rest of the time.

It didn't seem natural, but then, nothing about them ever was.

---

*As the Slytherin Head of House, he was frustrated. He couldn't get anything out of them. They did not join in with student activities. They did not make friends. They weren't even interested in Quidditch.*

*Well, Pugsley was. Pugsley, despite his strangeness, was genuinely liked, even by a few Gryffindors. The boy was bright, open, and unlike everyone else, was not affected in the slightest by Harry and Wednesday's aloofness, or by their way of dealing with people who irritated them.*

*He'd tried to talk to Pugsley about them once, but he had got nothing back. The boy simply refused to talk about his sister and Harry. When Snape broached the subject, the light fell out of Pugsley's eyes, and it was suddenly obvious that the boy was related to them.*

*Even the Weasley Twins knew to leave Harry and Wednesday alone. They had tried to pull a prank, and something had gone wrong. The Twins had been found the next morning, naked, staked out on the Quidditch pitch, in the centre of a pentagram, with no memory at all of what had happened the night before.*

*Wednesday had half-smiled all the following day.*

*Hermione seemed to be close to Pugsley, and was grateful. She was able to study in peace, talk to Pugsley when she wanted a friend, and was never mocked or insulted.*

*Well, not after the first time Draco had made a fuss about a "Mudblood" being in the Slytherin common room.*

---

"Come with us," Pugsley said to Hermione. "I've got a great book on charms that Harry got me for my birthday last year. It's got some great Native American stuff."

Hermione looked torn. "But it's the Slytherin common room," she protested. "I'm not supposed to be in there, and they don't like me."

Pugsley shrugged indifferently. "Trust me, there won't be any problems."

Harry and Wednesday walked behind them, following them into the common room as Pugsley said the password to the Dungeon Portcullis. It rose slowly with a rusty creaking noise.

Pugsley took Hermione's hand and pulled her in. "Hey Daph, Pan, Theo," he greeted the first people he saw cheerfully.

"Pugs," Daphne Greengrass responded softly.

"What the Hell is that Mudblood doing in here?" Draco yelled as he walked into the common room.

"What's a Mudblood?" Harry asked.

Draco froze; it didn't appear that he had seen Harry and Wednesday.

"A Muggle-born, someone who doesn't have magical parents," Theodore Nott stated. "There are also half-bloods, mixed-bloods. All used as derogatory terms by purebloods who believe that they and they alone have superior blood."

"Interesting," Wednesday said softly. There was a ripple through the room. Everyone seemed to know that Wednesday was about to do something, but no one dared to try and stop her, nor did anyone leave; no one wanted to miss what was going to happen. "Hermione, hold out your hand."

Hermione did exactly as she was told.

Wednesday moved, a knife appearing in her hand. She took Hermione's hand and sliced it lightly. Hermione gasped as bright red blood bubbled up through the cut. Harry was next to her, a potions vial in his hand, and Wednesday turned Hermione's hand so that the blood dripped into it.

When it was full, Wednesday traced the wound with her finger and the gash vanished, causing Hermione to stare at her unmarked hand in shock.

Wednesday studied the vial full of blood for a second, and then shrugged and drank it. "So that was a Mudblood," she mused.

"I'm a half-blood," Harry volunteered.

“Hand?” Wednesday asked.

Harry shook his head.

“Please?”

Harry opened his mouth and then bit his bottom lip lightly.

*“Por eternidad, mi amor.”*

He nodded and bit his lip hard until the blood was spurting out.

She took a step closer and kissed him, before sucking his bottom lip.

When they separated, she had a slight smile on her face, and Harry’s lip was unbroken.

She turned with the knife back in her hand. “Come here, Malfoy,” she ordered coldly.

Draco paled and started to back away. “Stay away from me,” he shouted.

“Oh no,” Wednesday said solemnly. “I am interested in this important difference in blood.”

“Use Goyle’s!”

Goyle blinked.

“No,” Wednesday replied, and started to walk inexorably toward the cringing blond boy.

“Help me!” Draco shouted.

No one moved.

Draco whimpered and pulled out his wand.

Wednesday ignored it.

“I’ll curse you,” he threatened.

Wednesday slowly smiled. “Go ahead,” she challenged him.

Draco whimpered again, the wand shaking violently in his hand.

She reached him, and reached out, gently raising his chin.

“P-p-please,” he begged.

She placed the knife against his jugular.

“Wednesday,” Harry called.

She sighed and then viciously stabbed the knife into his hand, collecting the blood quickly as Draco screamed.

She pulled the knife out and it vanished. She didn’t bother to heal him as she walked back over to Harry. She looked at Draco’s blood, before drinking it.

She spat it out half way through. “Yeuch,” she said, coughing. “It’s stale and tasteless.”

Harry leaned over and kissed her. He leant back, running his tongue over his lips. “Powerless too,” he agreed.

“What do you mean?” Daphne asked.

Wednesday looked at her. “Hermione’s blood is rich, full of life and genetic diversity. Powerful, too, much more so than Malfoy’s blood. If he’s what purebloods aspire to, then I pity you all.” She turned to Harry. “You tell me I should occasionally try being nice, correct?”

Harry nodded.

“We should kill all the purebloods.”

There was a gasp from everyone in the room.

“Why?”

“They’re slowly dying out,” Wednesday explained. “They are dying a slow death, losing their power and their ability. It would be much nicer of us to put them out of their misery now.”

“How many of you are convinced that blood supremacy is the way forward?” Harry asked.

Regardless of true belief, no one raised their hands.

Wednesday sighed. “Cowards,” she said quietly. “Not even willing to die for your beliefs.”

“W-W-Wednesday,” Hermione said. “Am I more powerful than Harry as well?”

Wednesday looked at her in absolute silence for a few seconds. Then, to the shock and horror of nearly everyone, muscles on her face started to move. As if unable to control herself, Wednesday leaned against Harry and started to laugh, hard. Harry wrapped one arm around her and half smiled himself.

It took a few minutes for the girl to stop laughing. “I’ve not laughed like that in a long time.”

“Two years, five days,” Harry pointed out.

“When you got me that surprise present,” she nodded. “I still owe you for that.”

Harry smiled at her.

Wednesday looked at Hermione. “No, you’re not.”

“O-one more question,” Hermione said nervously. “How can you tell?”

“Years of practice,” was her chilling reply.

---

*He should be happier. The House Cup was going to be won by Slytherin. Their lead was totally insurmountable, because Harry and Wednesday won a lot of points. Both were completely committed to their studies, often doing extra credit assignments. It was obvious that neither cared about the house points system; they were both far too interested in simply learning anything and everything.*

*They hadn’t lost any points, either.*

*Because not once, not a single time, had anyone been able to prove that they had done anything worthy of deducting points.*

*Everyone knew they were responsible for a lot of things. And everyone knew that no one could actually prove it.*

*But he did at least have the chance to learn more about the family involved.*

---

There was a knock on his door.

“Enter.” His door opened, and Daphne Greengrass walked in. “How are you enjoying Hogwarts?”

“It’s not what I expected, Uncle Sev,” she said. “It’s not what Mum and Dad told me it would be.”

That was hardly a surprise, Agatha and Mark Greengrass were well known for their conservative views.

“He’s not what I thought, either,” she added.

“Harry?”

“What, well, yeah, but I was talking about Draco. Is he playing a game, making people underestimate him?”

“It is possible,” Severus agreed. He had his doubts, but Daphne’s idea was possible.

Daphne’s face cleared as she nodded. “I didn’t think he could be that stupid,” she said cheerfully. “Maybe my parents were right, and if he’s willing to go through so much to be underestimated, he is worthy of his position.”

Several incidents flashed through his mind, but he didn’t say anything. There was no need to tip his hand at this early stage. As much as he liked – possibly loved – his god-daughter, looking after himself always came first.

“Thanks, Uncle Sev,” Daphne said as she bounced out, “see you at dinner.”

Snape sighed, and a few minutes later, followed her path to the Great Hall. He routinely detested having to eat while watching over hundreds of children with the table manners of pigs. The noise level was back to normal now; the students were used to the silence and calm that surrounded Wednesday and Potter, and had learnt that if you ignored them, they ignored you back.

Everyone was a lot happier that way.

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The doors opened dramatically, interrupting his musings, and he stared at the people in the door.

On the left was a hunched-over man, who was completely bald. Next to him was a couple. They were both tall with incredibly dark hair and outrageous good looks. He was tanned, and looked like he came from the Mediterranean, while she was completely pale with long dark hair. He was looking around eagerly, as if excited to be there, she had a calm expression and an air of tolerance.

"May I help you?" Minerva asked.

"Mom, Dad, Uncle Fester!" Pugsley shouted and ran over to them.

"Pugsley!" the uncle shouted, and picked him into a huge bear hug.

"We're here to see our children," the woman said. As soon as she spoke, there wasn't a single doubt as to her parentage of Wednesday. The voice was older, richer and more controlled, but had the same chilling power behind it.

"We don't allow visitors during the school year," McGonagall interrupted.

"What?" the man demanded. "Not allow us to see our beloved offspring? Nonsense," he said, dismissing McGonagall's statement. "Ah, and we're in time for food as well. Excellent! I do hope it's something exciting. Thing, be a chap and fetch us a table, we'll sit next to Harry and Wednesday."

There was a series of screams as a disembodied hand crawled into the room. It jumped up and high-fived Pugsley before scurrying over to the Slytherin table. It snapped its fingers and a new table appeared.

"I must protest," Minerva shouted.

The man and woman didn't stop. "Must you?" the male inquired. "Please, don't let us stop you." They continued to walk calmly to their table.

"Minerva," Dumbledore said quietly. "I gave them permission."

"You did?"

"They demanded it," he confessed, "before they would let Pugsley, Harry and Wednesday come here."

"Wednesday," Uncle Fester said cheerfully. "Have you got a hug for your favourite uncle?"

"You're my *only* uncle," she said quietly. "Well, the only uncle with a set of working heart and lungs."

He opened his arms, and she stepped into them, and they hugged.

"Harry old boy," the tall man said. "It's dashed good to see you; why, the house hasn't been the same without you."

"It's good to see you as well, Gomez."

"While I'm here," he said in what passed for a whisper, "do you have any of that potion?"

"The one that turns you into a blood sucking ravenous beast with the stamina of a platoon of Marines on shore leave?"

Gomez nodded eagerly.

"I can whip some up for you."

"Tell me," Uncle Fester said to Wednesday. "How is it here?"

"On the first day," Wednesday said coldly, "they tried to make us sing."

"What sort of cruel and dangerous place are you running here, Bumbledore?" Gomez demanded. "Singing? Why, you'll be telling me next that they wanted you to take part in team sports and other clubs."

"They did?" Gomez asked incredulously after seeing his daughter's look. "I'm sorry, Bumbledore assured me that this was a decent school. If I'd known, I'd have never let you come."

"It's *D*umbledore, Dad," Pugsley pointed out.

"It is? Are you sure?"

Pugsley nodded.

"How remarkable."

"Wednesday," the woman said, looking at her daughter.

Wednesday moved over and willingly hugged the tall woman.

"Harry."

"Morticia," Harry said solemnly.

"Am I going to have to tie you to some train tracks in front of an onrushing train?" she demanded.

"The train doesn't run at the moment," Harry pointed out sadly.

"Toddler pictures?"

"I give," he said, and hugged her tightly.

She ruffled his hair affectionately, before kissing him. "The house misses you," she told him. "It's not had any new explosions in far too long, so we decided we'd come and see you."

"How's Lurch?" Harry asked.

"Delighted that you asked about him. He's at home; we have some Jehovah's Witnesses locked up in the dungeon and he's torturing them for us."

"Mum, Dad," Pugsley said, as he ran over to the Gryffindor table to grab Hermione. He dragged her back over. "This is Hermione. I saved her from a Troll and Wednesday said I could keep her."

"That was nice of you, dear," Morticia said, praising her daughter.

"It's nice to meet you," Hermione said.

"Welcome to the family," Gomez said expansively. "I'm sure you'll fit right in."

Hermione nodded uncertainly.

"I'm Pugsley's d..." Gomez started and then stopped. He stared at the Ravenclaw table. "Violet?"

"Gomez," the Grey Lady, the Ravenclaw ghost, said warmly. "You old fiend."

"You didn't tell me you were haunting Hogwarts."

"I've been doing it for a while," the ghost said. "It keeps me busy."

"This is my wife, Morticia."

"Violet and I know each other," Morticia said smoothly. "You must come and visit us tonight. I've got a spell that you'll love."

The Grey Lady giggled and blushed as she nodded, before drifting out of sight.

"Harry," Gomez stage whispered again, "I think I'm going to need that potion tonight."

"I'll get on it after dinner," Harry promised.

"Food," Uncle Fester said. "That's the spirit. I'm hungry enough to eat a centaur."

"There are some in the forest," Wednesday pointed out.

"Oooh, can I go and grab one?"

"You'll ruin your appetite before lunch," Harry scolded.

Fester looked down and nodded sadly.

"So, tell me about your friends," Morticia said, as they waited for the food.

"Friends?" Wednesday asked, as if she didn't quite understand the word.

"Well, we've not received any reports that you've killed anyone, so we presumed."

Wednesday nodded. "Harry won't let me kill anyone," she complained.

"He won't?" Morticia asked in surprise. "Why ever not?"

"I hate paperwork," Harry replied evenly. "And I hate dealing with incompetents, and the Ministry over here has paperwork and incompetents in equal portions. But not to worry -- I've been keeping a list, and when we're finished, Wednesday can kill everyone who deserves it."

"Wonderful," Gomez said with an enthusiastic clap of his hands.

"In the meantime, Wednesday can introduce you to a few people who have stood out."

There was a strange sound of a hall full of people gulping at once.

Wednesday looked up. "The dyspeptic blond sitting over there is Draco Malfoy. He believes himself somewhat superior because of his blood. He's very proud of the fact that he can trace his blood back to the ninth century."

"A blood supremacist?" Morticia asked distastefully. "I do so hate new blood. You did tell him?"

"Why bother?" Wednesday asked. "He dislikes anything that's not pureblood. But his blood is dying, so it's not a problem."

Morticia shook her head sadly, "I can trace my family back to the birth of Atlantis."

"And mine goes back a few thousand years before that," Gomez added as an aside. He picked up Harry's glass, "One of my ancestors fought at the battle of Clah'Midu, and helped banish the evil ones to Hell. We never forget where we come from," he said as he saluted the air.

"Do they practice inbreeding?" he asked, his solemnity vanishing as if it had never existed.

"Yes."

Gomez was suddenly next to Draco, no one had seen him move, showing clearly who Harry and Wednesday had learned that skill from. He banged on Draco's head a few times and listened. "Why, there's not enough power in here to cook a demon," he said in surprise. "Are you fully grown?"

"I'm eleven," Draco snapped. "Of course not."

"So, you should be nearly fully trained with your power now."

"We don't teach our children magic until they come to Hogwarts," Dumbledore interjected.

"Why on earth not?" Gomez asked. "How do you expect them to grow up and push the boundaries of what is and what isn't possible?"

"Children below the age of eleven do not have the control necessary."

"Of course they don't," Gomez agreed, as he started to stalk around the room, his arms waving dramatically. "They're supposed to blow things up! They're supposed to get things wrong! They're supposed to kidnap their classmates and perform bizarre and unholy experiments on them! How else are they going to learn?"

"Gomez," Morticia said, "you're interrupting dinner."

"What? Oh, yes, of course." He was sat back down with his family in the blink of an eye.

"I think the food is ready," Harry pointed out.

"Excellent," Gomez cheered and looked down at his plate.

In front of him, a full roast goose appeared, with all the trimmings on heaving plates around it.

"What is this?" Uncle Fester asked.

"It's what passes for food around here," Pugsley said, starting to help himself to some vegetables.

"It makes eating a disgusting experience," Wednesday said.

"How nice," Morticia said delicately. "Gomez, cut the bird."

Gomez reared back out of his seat, a sword appearing in his hand. "Have at you!" he cried, and attacked the roasted bird. There was a blur of movement, and large segments flew off to land on his family's plates.

With a dramatic flourish, he threw the carcass on to Fester's plate and chucked the sword to one side, where it narrowly missed a squeaking Hufflepuff and landed in a suit of armour's hand.

"Thank you," Fester said gratefully.

Morticia gracefully passed the other bowls around the table.

Gomez took a bite and coughed. "That is the most repulsive thing I've touched in decades. Dumbledore promised you would be fed properly."

Harry shrugged. "It has a few of the needed vitamins. A little too much fat, but I've been making us nutritional potions. We've not starved."

"Even so," Morticia said. "I enjoy pain and suffering as much as the next sadomasochist, but I wouldn't feed this to our prisoners in the dungeon."

"They all seem to like it," Harry pointed out.

"Do you think that's why they've lost the ability to talk and seem fascinated by us?" Morticia asked.

"I think I've lost my appetite," Gomez muttered.

"If you finish it, we've got a present for you," Harry said.

"A present?" Gomez asked eagerly.

Harry nodded.

Gomez started to eat, and while he ate fast, his manners were exquisite, which was more than could be said for Fester, who was devouring the carcass with relish.

Morticia ate a little, but only enough to be polite. Pugsley ate a full meal, as did Hermione. Harry and Wednesday ate their normal portions - which wasn't much.

Gomez leaned back, a cigar appearing in his mouth. Thing jumped onto his shoulder, a lighter in his fingers. He snapped the lighter and lit the cigar.

"Thanks, Thing," Gomez said contentedly.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" Fester asked.

"Not at all," Gomez replied.

Harry reached out and placed his hand over Wednesday's mouth and nose, his lips moved as he cast a spell. He then did himself. He seemed to pause, before he leaned over the table and did Hermione as well.

Fester sat where he was, and thin trails of smoke started to stream out of every pore on his body.

Hermione smiled gratefully at Harry.

Fester sighed after a few moments and stopped smoking. "I needed that," he sighed.

Harry reached from under the table and placed a large box on the table.

Gomez reached for it eagerly and ripped open the paper eagerly. He reached inside and lifted a miniature replication of the Hogwarts Express onto the table. "Children," he said softly.

"We enchanted it for you," Pugsley said eagerly. "Press the button!"

He did, and the Hogwarts Express blew a horn before it slowly started to roll around the table, gathering speed as it did.

Harry moved his right hand and knocked a salt shaker into its path.

The miniature crashed straight into it and exploded into a ball of flames.

"Wonderful," Gomez cheered. "This is brilliant!"

"Look," Wednesday said.

From the back of the carriage, small figures stepped out and looked bewildered.

"If you get a big enough crash, they'll burn, too."

Gomez picked one of the small figures up, and tossed it in the air.

"Arrrrgggghhhh," Draco screamed as he was suddenly thrown into the air, before landing with a painful sounding crack.

Morticia sighed and waved her right hand. Draco was suddenly back in his spot, looking pristine. He looked around in bewildered panic, his eyes wild.

"Wednesday's been studying voodoo," Harry said proudly.

"Is this true?" Gomez asked.

Wednesday nodded shyly.

"That's wonderful," Gomez cried. "I'm so proud of you."

"I am, as well, Wednesday," Morticia said. "Why don't you show us around now," she continued. "We can see the others later."

Harry nodded, and took Wednesday's hand. Together, they led the family out of the Great Hall.



# Perfect Slytherins - Tales From The First Year

## Part 2

Snape sat down with the other three Hogwarts Heads of House and the Headmaster in the Headmaster's office after the meal was finished and the children sent off to their common rooms.

Minerva appeared to be fuming in her chair; she looked like she was ready to tear into anyone who spoke to her. "Exactly what," she ground out, "are those, those, those people doing at Hogwarts!! I've put up with the children, reluctantly, but this is too much!"

"Now, now, Minerva," Albus said gently.

Snape winced; he knew that was exactly the wrong thing to say to her.

"Albus," Minerva said, suddenly going cold. "When I heard that the Boy Who Lived was coming to school here, I was excited, if only to see the son of James and Lily. That child is not their son; he is the Boy Who Lived to become a nightmare! If you do not explain exactly what is going on, then I will have no choice but to tender my resignation, effective immediately."

Albus stared at her.

"There are some things, Minerva that I am not at liberty to discuss," Albus started.

"Then this is over," Minerva said and stood up. "I'm not going to stand for any more of your half truths when they are endangering children."

Albus looked shocked before he took a deep breath. "According to a prophecy, the only person who can defeat Voldemort when he returns, and yes, I am certain that he will return, is Harry James Potter."

Minerva sat down with a slump. "You are convinced of the veracity of this prophecy as it concerns Potter?"

He nodded. "I am totally convinced. It was always going to be either Harry or Neville Longbottom. And the Dark Lord chose Harry when he marked him."

Snape sneered. "If he's going to deal with a Dark Lord, I know who I would rather see tasked with the challenge."

"That is why I have been forced to make so many concessions. Because, as you can tell, the fact that a lot of people would die and England would fall without Harry does not mean much to Morticia and Gomez Addams."

"They are that evil?" Pomona queried.

Albus sighed deeply. "Evil? By any standard measure you care to take, yes. I found out that Harry was with them just after the end of term last year. So I did as much research on them as I could. They were not joking about being able to trace their families back to before the fall of Atlantis. They are both the product of what can only be described as the most mixed blood known to man. Back when the purebloods started to inbreed, their families discovered that inbreeding limited the gene pool.

"Because of this, they embarked on a sustained interbreeding campaign. They've got the blood of most of the sentient magical creatures in their family somewhere. It's led to some shocking mutations over the centuries, and entirely new classifications of species, in some cases. Thing, for example - the hand - appears to be completely sentient and aware of his surroundings. They have a cousin named Itt that is, as far as I can tell, a giant hairball.

"But they are also some of the most accepting people you could ever care to name. I found many examples of creatures that others shun and despise being welcomed with open arms into their house. Gomez and Morticia are both extremely generous to their friends - and they do have them." Albus sighed deeply. "I had to beg them to allow Harry to come to school here. They really didn't want him to, pointing out that they can teach their children a lot more than we can."

"How did Harry end up with them?" Minerva asked. "I thought you placed him with relatives?"

"I don't know," Dumbledore admitted. "I asked Arabella Figg to move nearby, so she could keep an eye on him, but one day he just vanished. I tried for a year to trace him before I had to give up. The charms I had in place told me that he was alive and healthy, but even they failed, soon afterwards. It was only when the Quill wrote out last year's candidates that I had another clue. I managed to get the address early and Portkeyed to the United States to talk to them." He looked up, asking "How is their academic progress?"

"Scarily brilliant," Filius said. "They are depressing my Ravenclaws."

"Your Ravenclaws need more than three hours sleep a night and are not the two most self-contained people I have ever met," Snape added.

"Severus?"

Snape sighed, already regretting adding anything to the conversation. "They don't sleep much, and spend most nights studying together. They appear to have found a way to nullify the protections on the Restricted Section of the library, and are working their way through that."

"Why didn't you stop them?" Minerva demanded.

He looked at her for a long moment. "Because I'm fond of breathing," he replied in his normal dry tone of voice.

Minerva didn't appear to know how to respond to that.

"Their performance in class is difficult to assess," Flitwick admitted. "Wednesday especially seems to detest having to use her wand."

"And having just seen her mother's ability with wandless magic, I'm not surprised," Pomona added. "They strike me as being incredibly magical, and I don't just mean their ability. They seem to use magic the same way they use their eyesight."

"Theory-wise," Minerva said, her voice sounding reluctant, "they are miles ahead of their peers. In practical terms, I don't know. They don't seem inclined to actually try things out fully."

"Severus?" Albus asked.

"In potions, they do what they have to, but nothing more. As much as it galls me to admit it, they're humouring me. I've seen some of the things they brew on their own, and it's beyond any of my other students, including the seventh years."

"Pomona?"

"They have an affinity with certain plants. I've seen Harry caress things that I won't touch without gloves. As for Wednesday," she paused for a second. "Well, she was bitten last week by a Fanged Geranium, and you know how painful that can be? She just lightly scratched it on the head until it released her, and Harry kissed her hand better." She paused again. "Literally, the wound was gone after he kissed it."

Albus nodded slowly. "So they listen, pick up the theory but don't demonstrate in class, especially if they have to use their wands?"

The professors nodded.

"But their homework is brilliant," Minerva sighed. "The sort of thing I'd be pleased if my seventh years were giving me. In-depth, literate, and fully exploring the ideas and concepts involved. You can tell they work together, because the ideas and theory are identical, although the writing style differs."

"And there's no point in pushing them," Snape added before he could stop himself. "They'll answer a few questions before they decide they've responded enough and then they'll stop answering."

"Harry told me that it would be fair to let someone else answer my questions," Filius said. "I'd never felt embarrassed by a student before."

Dumbledore looked at each of the staff members. "Did any of you see the other side to the family?"

"Other side?" Minerva asked.

"Take away the strangeness, the magic, and everything else. Look at them as a family."

"Hmm," Filius mused. "They are close, really close. The distance that Harry and Wednesday have doesn't seem to apply to their parents, or their uncle. They both seemed to react to praise positively, and the fact that they had made their father a present speaks volumes."

Albus nodded.

"Veela blood!" Snape said suddenly.

"Severus?" Minerva asked.

"I've been wondering how they can capture attention when they want it. Albus said that they had mixed their blood with other species."

"Excellent, Severus," Albus praised. "I do believe that you're right. It would certainly explain a lot of things. It's a lot more subtle than what we are used to. I shall have to be on my guard a lot more."

"So what are we going to do?" Minerva asked. "Most of the other children are terrified of them."

"No," Pomona said. "I talk to my Hufflepuffs a lot, and we've had a House Meeting about them; well, we discussed Pugsley as well."

"And?" Severus asked, interested.

"Pugsley is well-liked. My 'Puffs think he's funny. They know that as long as they avoid certain subjects, he'll make them laugh and he'll be friendly. He's also not as scarily smart as the other two."

"But," she looked around the table as she continued, "he is completely, one hundred percent, Hufflepuff-loyal to Harry and Wednesday. He won't accept anyone talking badly about them, and if he hears someone do so, then you get a quick lesson that he is indeed an Addams. I honestly believe that he would die for them if they asked."

"Now, as for Wednesday and Harry. They are *not* liked. But they are not disliked either. My 'Puffs know that if they leave them alone, they will never have to deal with them, and they are happy about it."

"My Ravenclaws say the same thing," Filius continued. "Only, they do try and get hold of some of the research that the two do. A few of them asked to study with them, including some of my seniors. They were told that they study alone, and that was it. My Ravenclaws were actually quite proud

that they managed to get away without being cursed.”

“Minerva, the Gryffindors?”

“To a man, they hate them. And I can’t decide if they hate Harry or Wednesday more. I think they feel betrayed by Harry, because he was supposed to be a Gryffindor. A lot of them are spreading rumours that he will be the next Dark Lord, and that she will be his executioner.”

Snape snorted.

“Part of it,” Minerva continued, ignoring Snape, “is that they have yet to be pranked, and that Fred and George refuse to do so. They find it frustrating.”

“Oh, what a pity,” Snape said sarcastically. “Your house can’t terrorise other people, so they are sulking. Perhaps I should send them a consignment of dummies.”

Minerva glared at Snape but held her tongue. “There is also the problem with Hermione,” she continued. “She is the third strongest student in the year, but she spends all her time with them.”

“With Pugsley,” Filius corrected.

“Quite. I’m afraid for her safety in the Slytherin common room. She can be a little overeager at times.”

“Hermione could walk into the centre of the Slytherin common room and shout ‘Voldemort is a git’, and no one would touch her. She’s under Pugsley’s protection, and if anyone dares touch him, or his property, the other two get involved. And no one, but no one, in my house is going to get on their bad sides,” Snape said with a measure of pride.

“How are the Slytherins about them?”

“Absolutely terrified,” Snape admitted blandly. “And yet,” he paused. “They are studying more, there is a lot less politics, and well, I believe that a lot of them are giving serious consideration to the whole pureblood issue. Wednesday made a very strong statement of the problems of interbreeding a few months ago, and tried to persuade Harry that it would be ‘nicer’ to kill all the purebloods to stop them from dying out slowly.”

Pomona half-smiled.

“Of course, there are a few in my house whose support for the Dark Lord’s ideals is firmly ingrained, and they have tried to help Draco fight back, but didn’t get very far.” He paused. “This might sound foolish, but I honestly think that Harry is protecting them.”

“Excuse me?” Minerva demanded.

“When someone threatens Wednesday, Harry acts. It tends to be violent, it tends to be harsh *and* over the top. But it is never fatal, and never anything that can’t be fixed easily.” He paused. “What do you think would happen if Wednesday retaliated? You saw how she defeated the Troll. An eleven year old girl treated a fully grown Troll like it was an errant Krup.”

Everyone was silent.

“This is my problem, Albus, that girl is a killer,” Minerva announced.

“She is,” Snape agreed. “But she does what Harry tells her to, if it’s serious.”

“And Harry?” Minerva asked.

Snape sighed. “He is not as psychotic. There is still some, well, some of his parents in him. But, if someone touches Wednesday, Pugsley, and now possibly Hermione, I wouldn’t want to stand in his way. Because he will do what he needs to do, what ever that is.

“Wednesday is amoral, fiercely loyal to Harry and Harry alone while still caring about her brother and the other members of her family, and completely uncaring about the rest of the world. They *will* destroy Voldemort, if only because Voldemort will not be able to leave Harry alone.”

“What if he did?”

“Then we would all be perfectly screwed, because they would not lift a finger to help us. As it is, though, I have a certain degree of optimism over this whole thing.”

“Why?” Filius asked.

“If the boy was a Gryffindor, I’d be worried about him meeting the Dark Lord, but as a Slytherin, especially with how he is reacting, I believe that the Dark Lord will be the one regretting things.”

“You see my problem?” Albus asked. “We five are the only people who truly believe that Voldemort will return, and our fate rests on a boy, and rather than the problem being whether or not the boy is capable, the problem is keeping him involved enough so that he does decide to deal with Voldemort.” He paused, “And at the same time, I am not unaware of the problems this causes. But until they actually do something that I can prove, that I have evidence I can use against them, there is not much that I can actually do. This has been my problem with the Dark Lord’s followers since the start. Until they actually do something, there is very little I can do. I watch them, but they are far too careful.”

Minerva sighed. "And the parents? They did injure Malfoy."

"Did they?" Albus asked dryly.

"We heard the crack," Minerva said.

"Prove that was an injury," Dumbledore challenged.

"I can't; he was healed."

"So what injury would you like me to charge them with? You do know that Gomez is a lawyer, don't you?"

Minerva sighed. "So your hands are tied. We need him more than he needs us, and if we do anything at all to him or Wednesday, they'll simply leave?"

"Exactly. I'm more than willing to listen to any suggestions that you might have."

Silence was his only reply.

---

Severus found himself curiously dreading breakfast. The Addams Family had vanished the night before, and no one had a clue where they had gone. They hadn't even asked permission for the children to leave the school.

He walked into the Great Hall and took his seat, slightly relieved when he saw that they were not there. The relief did not last for long, as the entire family wandered in. Fester was telling a joke to Pugsley, Wednesday and Harry. The latter two looked vaguely amused, while Pugsley was killing himself with laughter.

They sat down, a completely self-contained family unit. Their breakfasts appeared instantly for them. Snape had no idea what they were eating, and he didn't think that he wanted to know.

He let his eyes wander up the Slytherin table and stopped on Draco Malfoy. He groaned under his breath. The boy had a smirk on his face and was looking around eagerly. Something was obviously about to happen. Snape played with the food on his plate; somewhat suspecting that he wasn't going to want anything in his stomach.

It was toward the end of the meal that the doors opened and Lucius Malfoy marched in. He stopped next to the Addamses, who didn't look up.

"Lucius?" Albus asked; Snape could hear a faint undertone of amusement in his voice.

"Since you are now running an open house," Lucius sneered, "I thought I might have a word with your other guests."

"Be my guest," Albus said quietly.

Lucius turned to the family, who continued to completely ignore him. Eventually, he snarled, "Addams!"

They all ignored him, continuing their low-voiced discussions.

Lucius seemed a little unsure as to what to actually do. He had no experience dealing people treating him as if he didn't exist. There were a few giggles, especially from the Gryffindor table.

"I demand that you pay attention to me," he snarled, banging his cane onto the table.

Thing jumped, grabbed the cane, yanked it from the man's hand and swung it like a baseball bat, catching Lucius in the knee.

This time there was distinct laughter from the students.

Lucius snarled and pulled out his wand.

"May I help you?" Gomez asked as he turned to face the man cheerfully.

Lucius blinked.

"Another pureblood?" Gomez asked Harry.

Harry nodded.

"I'm beginning to think that you *are* right, Wednesday," he said. "It *would* be nicer to kill them all now. Why, this one seems to have temporarily lost the ability to speak."

"You can see the relationship to his son, can't you?" Wednesday said coldly. "You can actually see that he has more power than Draco, and that it has been diluted in the subsequent generation. It would be good to get his mother here as well. We could conduct some experiments on them."

"Splendid idea," Gomez said. "You, good fellow, go and fetch your wife and report back here for experimentation," he ordered Lucius in a relatively genial tone of voice.

"How dare you," Lucius snarled.

"How dare I what?" Gomez asked.

"Do you know who I am?" Lucius asked as he regained his composure.

"A weak powerless product of a flawed breeding program who can only trace his family back through a mere millennium," Wednesday replied coldly.

"You should watch your tongue, young lady. And not speak when your betters are talking."

Wednesday turned to face him, focusing her entire being on him. "Watching one's tongue makes one look foolish," she pointed out quietly. "And *you* are not my better."

Lucius sneered at her and opened his mouth. Almost in slow motion, Harry pulled out his wand and cursed Lucius. Lucius jumped to the side, and tripped as his injured knee gave way. He started to raise his wand only for a knife to pin his wand hand to the floor. Harry smiled faintly and turned back to his family.

"How dare you, I'll see you in jail for this."

"Jail?" Morticia asked hopefully. "A dark and damp dungeon full of those wonderful Dementors on an eerie island?"

"Azkaban," Lucius snarled in agreement.

"Make him arrest us, Darling," Morticia requested, "you promised me a forty-third honeymoon."

"Harry, what's the best way we can get arrested and sent to Azkaban?"

"Do you want him to live?" Harry asked coldly.

Gomez paused, a thoughtful expression appearing on his face. "Does it matter?" he asked curiously.

"There are three curses that will get you into Azkaban easily," Harry lectured. "If you want to kill someone and make it quick and easy, you use the Killing Curse. Its incantation is *Avada Kedavra*. Although," he added after a pause, "the idea of a quick and easy death seems very wrong to me. If you want to totally control someone, you use the Imperius. The incantation is *Imperio*. And if you just want to cause a lot of pain, you use the Cruciatus curse. That is done by casting *Crucio*."

"If you ask me," Harry continued, "this is exactly what is wrong with this country. Rather than killing or torturing someone properly, they use cheap spells to do it for them, so they never have to deal with the repercussions of their actions. It's reprehensible."

"Different cultures have different beliefs, Harry; we shouldn't judge another culture, even if they do appear cowardly to our eyes," Morticia admonished.

"Yes, Morticia," Harry agreed.

Lucius finally yanked the blade out of his hand and stood. He raised his wand and pointed it at them. "You will come with me," he ordered.

"Of course we will," Gomez agreed. "Do I need to use a stick?" he asked in a stage whisper to Harry.

"Use mine," Harry offered, handing over his wand. "But you might want to practice first."

"*Crucio*," Gomez said, pointing the wand vaguely in Morticia's direction.

Morticia gripped the table and shuddered hard.

Gomez smiled cheerfully and turned to Lucius. "*Crucio*," he said negligently.

Lucius tried to dodge, but wasn't fast enough. He screamed in agony and fell to the floor. Gomez looked surprised. "Am I doing it wrong?" he asked. He cancelled the spell and cast it on his wife again. As before, she simply shuddered. He went back to Lucius and cast the spell again. "I suppose it's effective," he said doubtfully, "but it really lacks the personal touch."

"Don't dismiss it yet, Gomez," Morticia said. "It's quite exhilarating from this end."

Gomez cancelled the spell and handed the wand back to Harry. "Thank you."

"You're welcome."

"Now, I've committed the crime, where are the police?"

"Five, four, three, two," Wednesday counted down, "one."

The doors flew open, and a group of Aurors, led by a tall black man with a shaved head. "The Ministry got a report of illegal curses," he said, his wand at the ready.

"That was us," Gomez admitted happily. "We demand a full trial. I appoint myself as our lawyer."

"We? Only one person did the curse," the Auror pointed out suspiciously.

"How tiresome," Morticia murmured. "May I borrow your stick, Wednesday?"

"Of course, Mother," she said and passed over the wand.

"*Imperio*," she said quietly, pointing the wand at Lucius.

"Put the wand down," the Auror screamed.

"Go jump off a bridge," she instructed Lucius. "There," she said as she passed the wand back to Wednesday. "Happy?"

"Both of you come with me."

"I think we'll leave now as well," Fester said. "I fancy going to Fiji. If Gomez and Morticia are going to have a holiday, so should I. Coming, Thing?"

Thing jumped onto his shoulder and they wandered out cheerfully.

"What about my father?" Draco demanded, as Lucius started to walk out.

The Auror looked at him for a long time. "According to the Ministerial records, your father has a lot of experience in fighting the Imperius, so I reckon he'll be fine," He replied after a moment. He then marched Gomez and Morticia out of the school at wand point. Not that it seemed necessary, as the couple were strolling along merrily.

"Father!" Draco called as he chased after the elder Malfoy.

"Aren't you worried?" Hermione asked into the ensuing silence.

"Of course not," Pugsley said cheerfully. "Dad's never won a case in his life; he'll get them sent to Azkaban."

Hermione opened her mouth, but didn't seem to be able to find another question.

"Harry," Wednesday said. "I want you to learn that curse as soon as possible."

"I already have. But I'm not going to use it on you until you're older."

"It's not fair!" Wednesday said, slamming her hands on her table. "I'm *almost* a woman, Harry. I have needs, you know. You won't torture me, you won't tie me to the bed or use any of the toys in my hope chest, you won't whip me until I'm a gibbering wreck, you won't even lock me in a sensory deprivation tank for a month.

"It's not bloody fair!" She stormed out, slamming the door behind her, leaving a silent and stunned audience behind.

Harry looked at Pugsley. "Women," he said with a helpless shrug.

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*To Snape's amusement, Lucius ended up jumping off of a bridge and broke his leg. He attempted to sue the Addamses, but came up against Gomez. Somehow, the male Addams managed to lose the case spectacularly, and yet leave Lucius with absolutely nothing, while the Addamses enjoyed a four-month stay in Azkaban. It didn't go unnoticed that they would be out in time for the end of the school year.*

*Draco had completely retreated by then. The absolute casualness in which his father had been defeated had punched a large hole in his world view, and the effects would hopefully last the length of the boy's life.*

*He'd enjoyed several more conversations with Daphne, and her loyalty to her parents meant that she had decided to stand where they wanted – next to the Malfoys – however, she was starting to show some interesting signs of independent thought.*

*The next big thing had been the Philosopher's Stone. Albus was aware that the security was lacking, but it was the best that a bunch of teachers could do - and still make it accessible if needed. Hogwarts itself was the biggest deterrent, that and the fact that no one actually knew the stone was in the school*

*It wasn't until later that he had found out the true story of what happened from Hermione.*

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"Harry," Pugsley shouted as he pulled Hermione across the library to them.

Harry didn't look up. "Sit," he ordered.

Pugsley sat in the only chair and pulled Hermione down next to him.

Thirty seconds later, Harry placed his quill down, and waited. Another fifteen seconds passed and Wednesday placed hers down as well.

"What can I do for you?" Harry asked.

"Tell him," Pugsley ordered.

"I was in the library earlier, and Weasley was doing some studying, along with Finnegan and Longbottom," Hermione said nervously. "They were looking up Nicolas Flamel. He's an..."

"Alchemist, along with his wife, creator of the Philosopher's stone," Harry cut in.

Hermione blinked at him. "Yeah," she agreed. "I was listening in, and they think that it's in Hogwarts and that Snape is going to steal it for Voldemort and that it's..."

"In the forbidden corridor on the third floor, behind the Cerberus," Wednesday said.

"How did you know that?" Hermione gasped.

"Where else would it be if it was in Hogwarts?" she asked, ignoring the question about how they knew what was behind the door.

"They're going to try and rescue it tomorrow. They said they tried to talk to McGonagall, but she wouldn't listen."

"Do we want it?" Wednesday asked.

"It *is* Uncle Fester's birthday soon," Harry pointed out.

"What would he do with it?" Wednesday asked.

"Nothing, it's pretty useless as a method for immortality. But, we can get the Flamels to give him some lessons on Alchemy. He's wanted to be able to turn gold into iron for years."

"True," Wednesday agreed. "We'll get it then."

"But what about V-V-Voldemort?" Hermione asked.

"What about him?"

"What if he's there?"

"Then we'll deal with him, or we'll die," Wednesday said with a shrug.

"How can you be so blasé about it?" Hermione demanded.

"I believe that your headmaster likes to say that death is nothing but the next great adventure," Harry offered. "However, we prefer to believe that death is just the transition between this place and the next." He looked at his watch. "Pull out a book and do some homework," he ordered. "We'll go and get it when everyone else is in bed. You won't be missed; you spend enough time with us as it is."

Hermione nodded and did what she was told.

Wednesday watched her for a minute, and then looked at Pugsley, and back at Hermione. She eventually sighed and stood, walking over to a shelf on the far side of the library. She picked out a book and walked back, dropping it in front of Hermione.

"Don't write another word until you've learnt how to write a proper essay," she said firmly. "Professors do not want their lecture notes regurgitated at them in a semi-literate fashion."

Hermione blushed and looked down at the book. "Thank you," she mumbled as she opened the book eagerly and started to read. The book was fantastic.

Harry was looked at Wednesday, an enigmatic expression on his face.

She raised an eyebrow at him inquiringly.

He reached over and grabbed her hair, yanking her head back hard, and kissed her firmly.

A shudder went through her body, and an almost happy expression appeared on her face as Harry moved back from her. She shot Harry a blinding smile before she picked up her quill and got back to work.

It took another five minutes for the expression to fall off her face.

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Harry, Wednesday, Pugsley and Hermione opened the door that led to the guard dog. The door was locked, but a simple *Alohomora* charm opened it.

The dog immediately growled threateningly, but stopped as Wednesday walked over and hugged it. "Hey, boy," she said softly. "How's life treating

you?"

The three heads of the dog took it in turns to lick her face as she scratched behind their ears.

"According to Ron, Hagrid said that you need to use music to get past him."

"Orpheus did the same thing," Pugsley noted.

Harry smirked and cast a charm.

"What was that?" Hermione asked.

"Just made Wednesday's three-headed friend tone deaf. If anyone does try and get in, they'll have to retreat fast."

"Are you going to let us through?" Wednesday asked.

The beast nodded eagerly, in a rippling wave of happiness, and trotted back.

"Thanks," the girl continued. "We'll be back in as soon as we can."

Pugsley pulled open the trapdoor, and peered in. "Looks dark," he said.

Harry shrugged and jumped straight in.

"Harry!" Hermione yelled.

"Please keep your voice down when we're trying to steal a priceless artefact!" Wednesday said harshly through firmly clenched teeth.

"Sorry," Hermione whispered. "Is he okay?"

Wednesday shot a look at Pugsley and then jumped into the pit.

"Hermione," Pugsley said with a resigned sigh, "you're going to have to stop asking them questions. You've probably noticed that they're not like me. I'm relatively normal, I'd guess you say. My idea of a good life is having a lot of fun, seeing how much stuff I can blow up, and doing the odd bit of killing when asked. Those two have a different destiny. They will rule our Clan. I know they seem strange to you, especially the way they don't seem to have any fear, but that's because they've embraced death. Did you see the carriages the other years were using?"

"The horseless ones?"

"They are not horseless -- they are pulled by thestrals, and only people who understand death can see them. Harry and Wednesday can see them. I can't. I'll probably be able to next year after I do a few things this summer. So, while the idea of jumping into a dark pit might sound insane to you, it's not to them. Harry went first, and as he didn't scream, he was safe."

"Oh," Hermione said softly.

"Please, stop questioning them. They are tolerating you because of me. If you prove yourself open minded, intelligent and not irritating, they might eventually like you - and if they do, then you will have them as friends for the rest of your life."

"My life?" she asked.

"Yeah," Pugsley said with a shrug. "My family is very long-lived, what with all that bloodlines stuff, and Harry? Well, Harry is just Harry."

"I'll stop," she promised. "I was always like this growing up, asking too many questions and scaring people away."

"Hermione, you've got genius level intelligence," Pugsley said, "and that is going to cause some problems, but remember that they have as well, and that they've been studying magic in all its forms since they were young. While I was out playing with Fester, they were soaking up everything they could."

"Why, though?"

Pugsley shrugged, "So they can push back the frontiers of magic, I guess. This is not the place for an in-depth conversation about this. Why don't you come to our house over the summer?"

"Really?"

He nodded. "I'll protect you, Hermione, you'll be safe."

She blushed, unsure what to say.

He took her hand and pulled her over to the trapdoor. Without hesitation, he jumped in.

They fell into the inky darkness for some time, before they landed on something soft.

Harry and Wednesday looked at them. "Nice of you to join us," Harry said.

Pugsley grinned at him.

“Eek,” Hermione screamed quietly. “It’s got my leg.”

“What is it, Hermione?” Harry asked.

She took a deep breath and then seemed to relax. “I know this, it’s Devil’s Snare.”

Harry nodded. “And how do you get out of it?”

She thought for a moment. “It likes the dark and damp, so fire?”

“That’s one way of doing it,” Harry sighed. “But I dislike hurting innocent plants.”

Hermione bit her lip to stop herself screaming as a tendril wrapped around her neck.

“Stop that,” Harry said, poking the plant.

The tendril slowly pulled away, after giving Hermione’s neck a slight caress.

Harry and Wednesday were sitting calmly on top of the plant; Wednesday seemed to be playing a game with some of the tendrils. “Ready to go through?”

“Yeah,” Pugsley said. “Not all of us have your love for plant life.”

“You can let us through now,” he said, and the plant pulled to one side, revealing a stone corridor.

Harry and Wednesday stood up and walked through it. Hermione and Pugsley scrambled to follow them. They emerged into a beautiful high-ceilinged room, with thousands of small birds flying around.

“Keys,” Harry grunted.

“What?”

“They’re not birds, they’re flying keys. We’re supposed to catch one with the brooms and open the door.”

“I don’t *like* flying,” Hermione mumbled.

“Hermione,” Harry said with a long-suffering sigh. “Pay very close attention to this: if you don’t like a game, don’t play it.”

Hermione blinked at him.

“You only follow rules because they have been put in place by other people. Those rules could be for the good of society, for the good of the aristocracy, or because someone got up on the wrong side of bed that morning. You have to understand that rules come with punishments for breaking them, but once you decide that the punishments are a necessary risk, you can ignore the rules and do what you want.”

“That’s monstrous!”

Harry turned to her, and for the first time his expressionless mask dropped. “Before making judgements,” he hissed, his eyes flashing dangerously, “I suggest you take a long hard look at *your* society, how it treats others, before you call us monstrous.”

Wednesday reached out and lightly touched him. He seemed to calm, and the light vanished from his eyes.

“Teach her, Pugsley,” Harry ordered abruptly.

Pugsley looked disappointedly at Hermione. “When we get back, you will look up Werewolves, house-elves, Veela, and all the other species and see how they are treated.”

Hermione nodded and looked down.

Harry’s voice was back to its normal silky charm. “It’s time for some constructive Pugsley-ism.”

“All right!” Pugsley yelled, pumping his fist in the air as he stepped back into the dark corridor. He emerged a few seconds later, pulling a large cannon behind him. He pointed it at the door, ignoring Hermione’s gaping face. “Fire in the hole,” he yelled, and touched his wand to the top.

Hermione threw herself to the ground. Harry and Wednesday didn’t move as the heavy cannon ball destroyed the door.

“Good work,” Harry praised and strolled through. He stopped and looked around.

The others joined him. They were standing on the edge of a giant chessboard. Each piece was huge, and carved in such a way that there was no way across.

“Hermione?” Harry asked.

"We have to play ourselves across?" she asked. Harry was silent and unmoving. An expression appeared on her face, one she used when wrestling with a hard subject. "But we don't *like* chess, so we get the brooms from the last room and fly across?"

"There's hope for you yet," Wednesday muttered.

Hermione's face flushed with happiness; it was the nearest thing to a compliment that she had yet received from them.

Pugsley jogged back into the previous room and fetched the brooms. There were only three, so he looked at Harry.

Harry took two and gave one to Hermione. He placed his down and looked at Wednesday, who sat in front of him. Without looking back, they flew off, up, and over the chess set, landing the other side. Pugsley and Hermione followed them.

"This is the last one," Harry said.

Hermione opened her mouth but then shut it again.

Harry looked at her and nodded. "Hagrid found the beast, Sprout grew the Devil's Snare, Flitwick charmed the keys and McGonagall transfigured the Chess set. That only leaves Snape."

Hermione nodded.

Harry opened the next door, and immediately slammed it shut again. "Quirrell," he sighed.

"Quirrell?" Pugsley asked.

"I forgot Quirrell," he explained. "There's a Troll in the next room. I don't really want to kill him."

Wednesday nodded and walked in. There was an unholy scream, followed by a loud thump. Harry opened the door and followed her in. Wednesday was standing next to a large Troll, which was lying on the floor, a large bump on its head.

"That explains why there was a Troll in the dungeon earlier; one must have escaped from down here."

"Enslaving a sentient being to guard something that shouldn't be in a school," Harry pointed out to Hermione. "And we're monstrous?"

She looked away.

Harry walked through to the next room. As they stepped across the threshold, a fire sprang up behind them in the doorway. It wasn't ordinary fire either; it was purple. At the same instant, black flames shot up in the doorway leading onward, leaving them trapped.

There was a small table with seven bottles of potion on it. A piece of parchment gave a clue. Hermione read it out loud and then smiled happily. "Logic, at last, something I don't feel like a two-year-old with."

"Go ahead," Harry said.

Hermione looked up and down the bottles, as she started to murmur to herself. "All the information we need is here on this paper."

"Apart from the size of the bottles," Wednesday pointed out pedantically.

Hermione ignored her. "This one," she said triumphantly, holding up the smallest bottle. "This will get us through. And this one will get us out." Her face lost the triumphant look as she examined it. "There's only enough here for one person," she mumbled.

"Which is *why you* will be taking it," Harry said.

"Me?" Hermione squeaked.

Harry looked at Pugsley, and then took Wednesday's hand. They looked at each other for an endless moment, and then turned and walked straight through the fire.

"It's fake?" she asked Pugsley.

"No, it's as real as we are. Pain is only temporary, Hermione, and there are a lot of things worse than pain. Take the potion and walk through."

"What about you?"

"Never forget that *I* am an Addams," he said proudly, and walked through the fireplace.

Hermione walked closer and reached out, lightly touching the fire with her fingertip. Searing pain rocketed through her, but when she examined her finger, there was no sign of a burn. She shuddered at the thought that they had willingly walked through it. She drank the bottle and joined them at the other side.

Pugsley was on his knees, breathing heavily. Harry and Wednesday were looking at a mirror. It was a magnificent mirror, as high as the ceiling, with an ornate gold frame, standing on two clawed feet. There was an inscription carved around the top: *Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi*

Careful," Pugsley warned. "Magic mirror."

"What does it do?" Hermione asked.

"I show not your face, but your heart's desire," Pugsley replied, pointing to the inscription.

Hermione nodded and looked into it.

"What do you see?" Pugsley asked.

"I'm the Minister for Magic," she said. "I'm being inaugurated. It's brilliant."

"That's enough," Pugsley said and pulled her away. Hermione blinked a few times and shook herself.

"Low level compulsion charm mixed with another charm," Harry said. "Cute."

"What did you see?"

Pugsley grinned. "I was blowing up an abandoned church. It was glorious."

"Harry?" Hermione asked.

"Nothing," he said. "The charm wouldn't work on us. It only worked on Pugsley because he allowed it to."

"May I ask how?"

"It uses a skill called Legilimency," Harry said. "Pugsley is skilled at Occlumency. They are both mind arts; one allows you to enter someone else's mind; the other is a defensive measure. We will be teaching you how to protect your mind if you take up Pugsley's offer. You'll like the skill; it allows you to order your mind so that you can retrieve information faster."

"Aren't you curious?" Hermione asked.

Harry turned and looked at her. "It wouldn't matter if I was," he explained slowly. "My infamous scar was a curse scar. It used to have a connection to Voldemort."

"He's not dead then?"

"No. If he was, there wouldn't be any magic left to power the scar. We found a way to block the connection, though." Harry looked at Wednesday, and went back to examining the mirror.

"We found out it was still active last year, when Mother was teaching us Legilimency," Wednesday continued. "We did some research, and found that the scar would practically cripple Harry when Voldemort returned. We couldn't have an obvious weakness like that, so we tried to find a way around it.

"We did. Well, Mother did, actually. She's brilliant. It was what you would classify as a Dark spell, but the only way to do it. The downside was that it was going to be painful. More painful than you could ever imagine. The curse spell was connected to part of his brain, to the pain centre to be specific. It had to be removed, so the spell cauterised that part of his brain and then rebuilt it without the foreign magic. The spell was designed as punishment by the Egyptians. So we took it and that had the unexpected side effect of making us immune to mind spells."

"Wait a second, you took it too?" Hermione demanded.

Wednesday looked at her. "There was a seventy percent chance of death. I wasn't letting him go through it on his own."

"It was the most painful thing I've ever seen," Pugsley said. "And possibly the bravest."

"It is impossible to describe the agony that it caused, and it was worse for Harry, because he had the other spell fighting it. We were unconscious for nearly a month after taking it, but it was worth it. We decided to leave the scar as a reminder."

"But at the Sorting...?"

"I can project," Wednesday answered.

"Got it," Harry interrupted. "Hermione, come here."

Hermione walked over to them. "Look in the mirror, and think about giving the stone to Pugsley."

She did, and slowly reached into the pockets of her robes. She lifted the stone out and gave it Pugsley.

Harry snorted. "Voldemort wanted the stone for himself, so Dumbledore made the charm so that only someone who didn't want it for himself could get it. He's far too optimistic for my liking."

Pugsley looked at it for a second and shrugged, passing it to Harry, who put it in his pocket. "Let's get to bed," he suggested.

They walked back through the flames that had guarded the mirror, and Hermione took the other potion allowing her through the other fire. The Troll

was still unconscious, and they flew back over the chess set, placing the brooms back where they had found them.

"Reparo," Harry said, pointing at the door with his wand. The door recreated itself, and they turned and walked back to the Devil's Snare.

"How are we going to get up?"

"Are you, or are you *not* a witch?" Wednesday asked, her voice a little icy. "*Wingardium Leviosa*," she called, and floated up to the ceiling.

"I don't know if I can do that," Hermione said as Harry floated up after Wednesday.

"Magic is about belief," Pugsley said. "I believe you can do it, and that's all you need."

"Really?"

He nodded.

Hermione looked at herself, and with a perfect swish of her wand, she enunciated the words clearly and floated up, accompanied by Pugsley.

"Pugsley, walk Hermione back to the Gryffindor common room."

"Okay, Harry, I'll see you later."

"Hermione," Harry called.

She turned to look at him.

"You did well."

He didn't wait for her reaction, he just turned and walked off, hand in hand with Wednesday and the key to immortality in his pocket.

She turned to Pugsley, who was smiling at her. "High praise," he told her. "Harry will never, ever lie to you, so if he said you did well, you did."

"They are so strange," Hermione said. "In their relationship and everything else."

"You could try talking to Wednesday," Pugsley suggested. "She might explain it for you. You probably won't be able to understand, now, but in a while it might make sense."

She nodded. "We broke so many rules today."

"And?"

She smiled. "It was exciting," she confessed. "Are we friends?"

"Like I said earlier, friendship to them is a life-long commitment. It isn't entered into lightly, or casually. As for me," he finished, as they arrived at the Tower, "yeah, I think we are."

---

The next day was somewhat anti-climactic, although there was some serious discussion going on among a few of the Gryffindors, but things happened the following morning at breakfast.

First a very pale and frightened looking Ron, Seamus and Neville walked in. Next, an obviously limping Quirrell came through and sat down at the table. He was incredibly pale and shaking, as if in anger.

Finally, when everyone was settled, the doors banged open and an elderly looking wizard stormed in, an angry expression on his face.

"Nicholas?" Professor Dumbledore asked in surprise.

"A dog, a plant, a flying key, a chess set, a Troll, a fire and a weak compulsion charm?" Nicholas Flamel demanded. "That was your idea of protection? I allowed you to take it out of Gringotts, against the goblins' advice, to place it in your hands, and you put it behind something that a couple of eleven year olds could get past?"

"They didn't get past it," Albus replied, looking at Ron and the other Gryffindors.

"Not *them*, you bumbling idiot," Flamel roared. "Safe? It would have been safer in Perenelle's rose garden. At least then it would have had a *Fidelius* charm on it." He took a deep breath and scanned the room. He paused and muttered a spell, and then nodded and looked around, his gaze finally settling on Harry and Wednesday. "I'm Nicholas Flamel, the co-creator of the Philosopher's stone."

"Hermione," Pugsley called, "come over here."

"I'm Harry Potter," Harry said, standing and walking over to the ancient wizard. "This is Wednesday Addams, her brother Pugsley, and Hermione Granger."

"Splendid to meet you," Flamel said cheerfully.

Nicholas," Albus said.

"You stay out of this," Flamel snarled, the anger and hostility in his voice clearly evident to anyone watching. "May I ask how you got past the protections?" his voice returned to normal as he looked at them.

"Wednesday's always had an affinity with animals, and we asked the Cerberus nicely to let us past. I've got a liking for plants, so I asked the Devil's Snare to let us past. Pugsley has a skill at blowing things up, so he destroyed the door locked by the flying keys - which we later repaired. We then flew over the chess set, Wednesday disabled the Troll - who will live, the three of us walked through the fire, although Hermione did take the potion, and then Hermione got the stone out of the Mirror and passed it to me."

"Impossible," Snape sneered. "That flame is worse than the Cruciatus curse."

"*Crucio*," Harry said, pointing his wand at Wednesday.

Wednesday dropped to one knee in surprise, before she shuddered and stood up again, before Harry cancelled it. "Thank you," she whispered with a small, but happy, smile on her face.

"Did you want the Aurors here for a reason?" Nicholas asked.

Harry nodded, and it didn't take long for the same Auror who had shown up during their family's visit to burst through the door, accompanied by a few different Aurors.

"Mr Flamel," he said in shock.

"Stand on guard, Kingsley," Flamel said sharply.

The Auror nodded and stepped backward.

"You do know that there is a better way of proving Snape wrong?" Nicholas said to Harry.

Harry nodded. "But Wednesday's been brilliant this year, so she deserved a reward." He reached into his pocket and pulled out the Philosopher's stone. "You know," he said, "I thought it'd be bigger."

"Give it to me," Quirrell suddenly screeched.

Harry, Wednesday and Flamel turned to face him, as did practically all of the rest of the school.

"Why?" Harry asked curiously.

"Let me talk to him," a high voice spoke.

The Great Hall went silent.

"Master, you are not strong enough!"

"I have strength enough... for this..."

Quirrell reached up and began to unwrap his turban. It fell away, and he turned slowly. Where there should have been a back to Quirrell's head, was a face, the most terrible face most people had ever seen. It was chalk-white with glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake.

Screams filled the Great Hall.

"Silence," Harry ordered. And there was.

"Voldemort, I presume?" Harry asked.

"Harry Potter..." it whispered. "See what I have become?" the face said. "Mere shadow and vapour ... I have form only when I can share another's body... but there have always been those willing to let me into their hearts and minds.... Unicorn blood has strengthened me, these past weeks... faithful Quirrell drinking it for me in the forest... and once I have the Elixir of Life, I will be able to create a body of my own.... Now... why don't you give me that Stone in your hand?"

Harry looked thoughtful. "Hmmm – uh, no, I don't think so," he said eventually.

"Don't be a fool," snarled the face. "Better save your own life and join me... or you'll meet the same end as your parents.... They died begging me for mercy..."

Harry laughed softly. "Death is nothing to be afraid of, coward. You cling to life like a disease, killing others to sustain your own life. You are weak, cowardly, and incompetent. And now you have revealed to everyone that you are not dead, including Nicholas Flamel and a whole bunch of Aurors. Your incompetence is truly mind-blowing."

"So you plan to keep the Elixir for yourself," Voldemort hissed, as Quirrell stood and started walking backward around the table and toward Harry.

"I have no fear of death," Harry replied calmly. "I merely wanted a present for my Uncle."

"You are giving it to a *relative*?" Voldemort asked in disbelief.

"Oh no, I just wanted that as a thank you from Nicholas," Harry explained and offered the stone to Flamel.

"You do know that the Philosopher's stone could make you rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and offer you life eternal?" Nicholas asked.

Harry shrugged and repeated himself. "I have no fear of death, and I've got enough money to get by."

"I think," Nicholas said slowly, "that it might be better to destroy it."

"Okay," Harry nodded.

"Wait," Voldemort yelled, and Quirrell stopped moving.

Harry looked at him.

"You seek knowledge," Voldemort hissed. "I can give you that knowledge."

"Unlikely," Harry said.

"For the stone," he offered. "All the work I've done is in Little Hangleton, in the abandoned church, in the crypt under the altar."

Harry stared at him for the longest moment. "You're telling the truth," he decided. "Very well." He chucked the stone to Pugsley. "Give it to him."

"No!" Albus cried, but he was ignored.

Quirrell took the stone and started to laugh. "Get us out of here," Voldemort demanded. He looked at Harry. "You are not what I expected."

Harry shrugged.

Quirrell started to run, out the door.

"How could you?" Albus asked from the table in a broken voice.

Harry stared at him in contempt.

"Four," Pugsley casually announced his count into the stunned silence, "three, two, one."

There was a pause, before a loud explosion made the cutlery on the tables rattle.

"Boom," Pugsley finished.

Nicholas looked at Harry. "I'll bet that hurt," he said.

Harry nodded. "And we'll need a new Defence professor for next year," he agreed.

"I'm disappointed in you, Albus," Nicholas said. "If I can tell that something is wrong with one of your Professors, surely you could as well?"

"It was obvious," Harry agreed.

Pugsley reached into his pocket and pulled out the real Philosopher's stone and handed it back to Harry.

Harry looked at Flamel.

"Destroy it."

Harry dropped it to the floor and stamped on it. There was a crack, and the stone shattered into a thousand places.

"Thank you," Nicholas sighed.

"Don't fear death," Harry advised him. "Take your wife and enjoy your last few years."

"Fine advice, young man," Nicholas said. "I'll go back with the Aurors and let everyone know that Voldemort is out there."

"Will there be any trouble with that?"

"Of course," Flamel said with a grin. "But nothing that we can't handle. Send your uncle to us when he's ready. And I'd like you to come as well. Come, Kingsley."

"What about the curse?" Kingsley asked.

"Think of it as a summoning charm," Nicholas suggested as they walked out the door.

Harry turned and walked back to the table, closely followed by Hermione, Wednesday and Pugsley.

Harry," Dumbledore called. "Why didn't you defeat Voldemort?"

"I did defeat him. But you can't *kill* a wraith, it's not really alive," Harry replied. "I'll have to wait until he gets a body before I let Wednesday kill him."

"Oh goody," Wednesday said cheerfully, a wide smile wreathing her face.

"Thank you," Dumbledore eventually said to Harry.

Harry shrugged and went back to his food.

"You have all seen that Voldemort is not dead," Dumbledore announced sadly, looking at the students. He seemed to pause, as if expecting more of a reaction from the students. "The times ahead will be hard, but together, we will prevail."

"Professor," the Head Boy said politely. "I think we all understand that Voldemort is back. But we've learnt this year that there are a lot of scary things in the world, and he is just one of them. And well, we've also learnt that a lot of what we thought we knew about the magical world isn't true. And that sometimes you fight fire with fire, and that Harry, Wednesday and Pugsley are hotter than Voldemort."

There was a loud cheer from the students, but the people being cheered ignored it.

They just got on with their breakfast.

---

*But it had been the last evening before the end of school that he had finally realised what had been nagging at his consciousness all year.*

---

"Wednesday?" Hermione asked.

Wednesday didn't look up from what she was doing.

"May I ask you something?"

Wednesday placed her quill down and turned to face Hermione, her entire concentration on the bushy-haired girl.

Hermione seemed to wilt before she stiffened her spine. "Harry," she said.

"What about him?" there was a warning tone in Wednesday's voice.

"You act," Hermione started, before she stopped and tried again. "You act like you're going to be together forever."

"We are," Wednesday agreed.

That response seemed the faze Hermione, but she quickly regrouped. "Aren't you, well, a little too young for that?"

"Yes," Wednesday agreed. "But as soon as I spot an inch of puberty in us, I'll rectify that problem immediately."

Hermione blushed furiously. "That wasn't what I meant," she explained. "I meant emotionally."

Wednesday looked at her for a long time before she folded her hands neatly in her lap. "I knew my destiny from the day I was born," she explained calmly.

"I would kill my first boyfriend with an axe at the age of seventeen. I would bury him in the garden and use his car. By the time I retired, I would have killed seventy-two men, and would be rich beyond the dreams of mere mortals, and completely alone. Our clan would have grown, and life would have continued."

"That's awful," Hermione gasped.

"I know," Wednesday agreed. "Only seventy-two deaths." She paused. "But then my mother returned from England with Harry. I was five years old, and was told to welcome him to the family.

"I was planning on covering him with something I had found growing in Uncle Fester's cupboard, when I met his eyes.

"I saw a new destiny available to me. I would only have one love, him, and I would not be able to kill randomly; I would only be able to kill his enemies. I would have to accept some light into my soul, just as he would have to accept some dark, but I would have a passion that would last throughout eternity, a love that would never die."

"So you made a decision," Hermione added.

"It took me four and a half years to make it," Wednesday agreed. "It was the hardest thing I'd ever done. The destiny I gave up was so appealing, but in the end, the realisation that without me, Harry would end up in some passionless nightmare of a relationship made my decision. Harry was family, and family always comes first."

Hermione gaped at her.

"I told him my decision two years ago."

"What happened?" Hermione asked. Wednesday told her the story.

--- *Two years prior* ---

Wednesday walked into Harry's room. Cauldrons bubbled all around as he worked, following instructions from a huge tome.

"Wednesday," he greeted her.

"Harry," she replied, and sat on his bed to wait for him.

It took him thirty minutes before he had finished. He scooped some out with a ladle and placed it into a test tube, before handing it to her. "A gift," he said, and smiled the smile that he seemed to reserve for her.

"What does it do?" she asked curiously.

"Try it out the next time someone tries to persuade you to 'join in' at school," he suggested. "It will put hair on their chest."

"Girls as well?" she asked.

He nodded.

"I've come to a decision," she told him.

"About us?" he asked.

She looked at him in surprise. "You knew?"

He nodded. "The moment I saw you."

"What did you know?"

"That I could have with you what Gomez has with Morticia."

"Most boys don't like girls."

"You're not a girl, you're Wednesday."

She couldn't help giving him a quick smile.

"What happens to you if I say no?" she asked.

"I go to school alone, make a few friends, get betrayed by authority figures, lose people I let into my heart, and then I die, and win, and end up in a dull marriage with stupidly named children. It's a life full of pain, suffering and misery."

She shuddered. "Oh, it sounds so, so -- tempting."

"I know," he agreed. "Your decision?"

"Tell me yours first," she asked, not demanded.

"I choose you," he said. "As attractive as the alternative is, without me, you will end up *content*."

She gasped in shock. "Content?"

He nodded. "Alone, after all those deaths, and with all that money, and our clan growing. You would be content."

"You're right," she said in abject horror as the realisation struck her. "I'm not even going to be miserable!"

"I can't let you go through that."

She closed her eyes. "Tell me," she whispered, "what happens to me if I choose you?"

"I will give you what you need, and what you don't even know yet as your desires," he said softly. "When we get older, I'll make you scream, both in agony and ecstasy. I'll rein you in, point you in the right direction and let you kill my enemies."

"I will allow you to flourish, to unleash hell on those that deserve it, and I'll accept you for what you are, Wednesday Friday Addams."

"With me, you will never, ever be content."

"How will you make me scream?" she asked. She'd never felt like she did at this moment; the realisation that her destiny was her biggest

nightmare had her terrified in a way that she never experienced before.

"I've talked to Gomez," he explained, "I asked him how he could live with Morticia, such a strong and violent witch.

"And he explained. When we're older, I'll give you the pain you desire, the pain you need, and I'll take you to places you've only dreamed about, I'll make the line between pleasure and pain disappear for you."

"You'd give up all that suffering for me?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I choose you," she said simply.

He moved in front of her and took her hands. "I'll accept if you give me one thing."

"What?" she asked.

"Your tears."

For the first time since she had known him, she was shocked. "What do you mean?"

"I want your soul, Wednesday, and I want you to give it to me."

"It's mine, though."

"Not any more. I'll take it for safe keeping, and store it with my own."

"I've never cried," she pointed out.

"That's why I want your tears," he agreed. "I've seen you smile, I've seen you mad, I've seen you go through every emotion you can have, as we learned how to hide them, but *your* tears are special."

"I'm scared," she confessed.

"As am I," he agreed.

She took a deep breath. "You want me to open myself like never before."

"And let me in."

"And you'll never let me go?"

"You'll be mine for eternity, as I'll be yours."

This wasn't what she had expected. She had been expecting to be the one to save him, for family. It was a shock to realise that he was giving up such wonderful agony for her, and that it was *him* saving her, and promising her so much.

Only an idiot would choose a life of contentment over a life of agony *and* ecstasy. And she still got to kill the people who stood in his way.

She opened her eyes and looked at him. She imagined contentment. She imagined living to the end of her days like that. She imagined a life where no one ever made her scream.

And slowly, the tears started to fall down her cheeks for the first and last time.

He moved, collecting them in one of his test tubes until she stopped.

He met her eyes and then drank the tears. "You will never cry again," he swore softly. "Your tears belong to me for eternity."

"For eternity," she agreed, banishing the thoughts about her previous destiny out of her mind.

---

"You had that discussion at nine!?"

"We were always precocious," Wednesday said in the same voice that she had used all through her recital.

"So you love Harry?"

"Love? Such a limiting word," Wednesday murmured. "He is my obsession, my desire, my nightmare, my dream, just as I am his. We crave the days when we are old enough for us to do what he promised, but we wait patiently for those days to arrive."

"I don't understand why you want him to hurt you."

"You never will," Wednesday said with the first hint of emotion: pity.

"You'll never understand what it can be like for me to completely submit to him. You'll have a life full of normality, contentment and happiness," she said with a hint of disgust at the notion. "I'll have a life where I touch insanity, where I am strong, where I am in control, where contentment is treated with the contempt it deserves. He will take me back to the mental places that I could never get to on my own and I will love him for as long as this universe exists for sacrificing his own misery for me."

"Misery is a bad thing," Hermione stated.

"Oh no," Wednesday disagreed. "Misery is a wonderful thing. It tears at your heart and soul, it makes you realise that you are alive. Good and bad, up and down, black and white, they are all extremes, all ideals, and if you accept that, then misery can be your biggest dream, happiness your biggest nightmare."

"That doesn't seem fair, though," Hermione said quietly.

"What doesn't?"

"Harry doing all that to you; you submitting to him."

Something in Wednesday's eyes changed.

"Do not ever think that our relationship is unbalanced." Her voice was now colder than liquid nitrogen. "Do not dare to insinuate that I do not fulfil his needs; that I do not make him scream as he needs, that I do not push him past the edge of sanity."

"That's not what I meant," Hermione protested.

Wednesday looked at her for what seemed like forever. In a slightly warmer voice, she continued. "Together we have seen things you can not comprehend, experienced things beyond sanity, crossed thresholds not meant to be crossed by humans. Yet we are still here. We are what we are because together we made the choice to be like this."

"Thank you, I think," Hermione said slowly.

Wednesday nodded and went back to her essay.

---

*That conversation had frightened Snape on more levels than he wanted to admit, even to himself.*

*For one so young to understand that agony and ecstasy were so interlinked was astounding.*

*No Gryffindor could ever truly understand the pain and glory of the Cruciatus curse. It was beyond their narrowmindsets. It was something he had only begun to understand as an adult, and for an eleven year old to understand it scared him.*

*They were the perfect Slytherins because they understood pain, they understood pleasure, and they knew how to get what they wanted.*

*And perfect Slytherins made his fear of Voldemort seem silly, when compared to his fear of them.*